

in dairy factories. In addition, the industry was assisted, as in previous seasons, by the direction of civilian labour, including some students and teachers during the long vacation, and by the release and direction of a number of Air Force personnel. The total number released from the Forces for employment in the industry during the twelve months ended 31st March, 1945, including Third Division personnel, was 581.

272. The special comb-out of Category "A" men held in industry on appeal, which was undertaken at the close of 1944 as part of the plan for the replacement of long-service personnel serving overseas, affected dairy factories in common with other industries. In the period from December, 1944, to June, 1945, 398 such men were made available to the Forces by Armed Forces Appeal Boards. As at 15th August, 1945, 569 Category "A" men were still held in the industry on appeal.

273. The labour situation in the 1945-46 season was eased by the large-scale demobilization following the defeat of Japan, but, to ensure that the industry was adequately staffed, priority was accorded by District Man-power Officers to applications for release of men willing to undertake employment in dairy factories, and the declaration of essentiality covering the industry was retained until the end of March, 1946.

274. A survey of dairy factories carried out by the Department in October, 1945, showed that the number of units in the industry fell from 406 in 1939 to 389 in 1945, but there was a small increase in the total labour force. The pre-war content of the industry was 4,085 at the peak of the season and 2,613 in the off-season. In 1945, with returns from three units outstanding, the peak labour force was 4,209, with an off-season force of 2,772.

275. Meat Freezing and Preserving.—This industry in recent years has engaged a peak labour force in the vicinity of 14,000 during the summer months, tapering off after March to a minimum of approximately 6,500 in the late winter and early spring months. Activity is carried on in practically all parts of the Dominion, the largest numbers being employed in the Auckland, Napier-Hastings, and Christchurch districts. The industry is of the greatest importance to the Dominion's economy, and during the war years Great Britain was more than ever dependent on supplies of frozen meat from New Zealand. It follows naturally that the industry was accorded the highest priority in the matter of labour during the period of the war. The staffing position in the various works was constantly under review, and surveys of labour required and labour available were taken prior to the commencement of operations each season and at regular intervals during the season. These measures enabled the Department to take whatever steps were necessary to ensure that the works were adequately manned. The task was complicated, however, due to the impossibility of accurately forecasting the progress and duration of seasons which vary according to weather conditions.

276. As early as 1940 the enlistment of men experienced in the industry was causing employers some concern, and Appeal Tribunals were postponing the military service of experienced men who could not be replaced. Freezing-works were included in the first group of industries afforded the protection of a declaration of essentiality in January, 1942, when man-power controls were introduced.

277. In August, 1942, a National Man-power Utilization Council for the industry was formed, and this was followed by the appointment of regional Man-power Utilization Committees in the four main centres, and later at Gisborne.

278. Prior to the commencement of the 1942-43 season most works were applying for the release of former employees who had entered the Forces. By November, 1942, a survey of the position in all works indicated that there would be an overall deficiency of approximately 3,000 men at the peak of the season. The Department met the position by the temporary direction to the industry of Grade I and Grade II men awaiting mobilization and by arranging for the release of freezing-workers from the Army. During the period 1st June, 1942, to 22nd March, 1943, recommendations for release